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Full Length Paper

Marketing Astrology: The Magic Touch

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Astrology has been defined in various ways throughout history, starting with the definition of knowledge that appears in Plato's Theaetetus dialogue in which knowledge is considered to be a "justified true belief". If knowledge can only emerge when all three conditions of belief, justification, and truth are met simultaneously then astrology can only be more belief than knowledge, or opinion or presumption. In that case, we can define astrology as "belief in the falsehood". The reason for the popularity of astrology does not seem to originate from science and knowledge, which makes it false in Plato's opinion. The person who chooses to believe in astrology, which somehow claims to explain the unknown, does so because astrology represents a product that offers security and hope for such person. This quality has meaning for the consumer society of the 21st century: astrology is a product of desire that markets the *experience of the future*. The unknown has always been interesting, for both ancient and contemporary societies. One can say that making the unknown known is equivalent to the individual of our age reassuring and motivating self in the pursuit of life. While the statement highlights astrology as an element of marketing, it does not seem possible to talk about a general definition of astrology, which is widely accepted. It is probably not easy to seek an answer to the question *what is astrology* within numerous intertwined relationships of astrology with, for example, religion, science, astronomy, or psychology. Our compass in navigating through this labyrinth would be the history of astrology.

Keywords: Marketing; Advertising; History; Astronomy; Astrology; Culture Industry.

INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS OF ASTROLOGY

It first emerged in written history in 2500 BC, in Mesopotamia where planets were believed to be potent gods who shaped the fate of mankind (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia>).

The information that Dr. Gustav-Adolf Schoener provides in his article 'Astrology, Religion, and Science' on the history and aims of astrology, points to astrology having a religious character in ancient times. The fact that the symbol describing God in Sumerian cuneiform scripts was a star, and that the same character later appeared in Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions suggests that the words 'God' and 'star' originated from the same linguistic source (<http://www.astroset.com/makale.htm>).

Astrology, whose first home is considered to be Mesopotamia and which was generally expressed with religious symbols, was later welcome across the whole world. In this process, one of the societies that has spent the most time and has reflected on astrology the most is the Greek.

The Greek developed a new, more personal, astrology built on the Zodiac combining the

astrological way of prophecy with their science of geometry. This zone, which is called “Zodiakos Kyklos” in Greek, or “circle of animals”, expands on both sides of the elliptical path that the sun travels in the sky during a year. The Zodiac is divided into twelve pieces, each of which is symbolized by an animal like Ram, Bull, Crab dividing the year into periods. Thus, the Greek created the art of the horoscope by using astrology in counseling those individuals who were curious about the impacts of the skies on their lives (<http://tr.wikipedia.org>).

Astrology managed to remain on the agenda during the ancient, medieval, and modern times, and even today, exerting its influence in all geographies, and drawing interest, as well as criticism at times, wherever it is talked about. We can say that the most distinctive point of criticism has been on the reasoning concerning what it is and what it is not. It can be said that the confusion concerning astrology’s definition has been in existence since the day astrology originated and both astrology and the science of astronomy has been subjected to numerous questions as part of this confusion. If not a science, what is astrology then? What is the difference between astrology and astronomy? Seeking answers to these questions led to the differentiation between astrology and astronomy.

While astronomy is the name of the science that examines the movement of stellar objects, the field concerned with the impacts of these objects on life on earth, and that makes predictions concerning the future was called astrology (<http://www.main.board.eu>). When did this separation happen? Why was such a separation needed? If astrology operated in a way similar to science, would it still be separated from astronomy? Why is one of these two fields, i.e. astrology, which is not a field of science, more popular than the other, i.e. astronomy, which is a field of science? Does astrology use the similarity in the meaning of the names to its advantage and often times define itself as a field of science, thus exploiting the trust and belief in being scientific? Could it be that, on the one hand it acts with a consciousness that is in accordance with its realization of not being a field of science, while it enjoys the approval of the claim for being ‘pseudo-science’ on the other? Which side benefited from this divorce – astrology or astronomy? The number of such questions can be increased to draw a boundary between meanings that try to stand on slippery ground. The astronomer Galileo Galilei would answer the first of these questions, which inherently includes its answer. When and why were astrology and astronomy separated from each other?

Everything started with Galileo Galilei, an astronomer, who turned his telescope to the planet Jupiter, and observed four satellites orbiting the planet and realized that the belief that all stellar objects revolved around the earth was not true. The realization that the center of the universe was not the Earth meant that all superstitions would disappear too (<http://www.kigem.com/content.asp>). Especially starting in 17th century AD, it was understood that there was not much space left in the skies for gods, after scientists and observers like Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton deciphered and explained the movement of stellar objects. It was at this time that astronomy and astrology parted ways (<http://www.uzaymer.cukurova.edu.tr/astroloji.htm>). This separation strengthened the relationship of astronomy with the sciences while pushing astronomy into a realm of explanation by concepts such as interpretation-belief-superstition. In this context, going back to our elaboration on the definition of knowledge according to Plato’s definition, why do we need astrology that is not science, not knowledge, and not true? Why are we interested in it? Are we really interested in it? Are we *made* to be interested in it? Are we made to feel that we need it? Are we *supposing*, just as astrology does? How does astrology shape this false

need? Where the magic wand of astrology touches is a future that is commoditized. A future that is sold! A future that is purchased! The name of the product is: the Future. The product that promises the wait actually exists to stall the waiting. All of these relationships find their meaning in the concept underlining the “Culture Industry”.

WHAT DOES THE THEORY OF CULTURE INDUSTRY SAY ABOUT ASTROLOGY?

‘Culture Industry creates its consumer, the modern individual.’ ‘The whole world is filtered through culture industry’ (Adorno, 2009: 55). Theodor W. Adorno, to whom these sentences belong, is a representative of the Frankfurt School¹. In the last section of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, on culture industry, Adorno says ‘the victory of advertising in culture industry is this: despite recognizing their sham, the consumer continues to purchase commodities of culture with an irrepressible desire.’ In the text titled ‘Schema of Mass Culture’ he writes: “Mass culture is simple makeup” (Adorno, 2009: 23).

Astrology, which provides instantaneous pleasure with its predictions about the future and which takes the individual away from the moment to prepare her/him for the future, is a leading product of industrializing culture. Astrology today caters to the inner world of the individual by creating an impression that there is a possibility for a negative situation in one’s life to improve in the future, by repeating this assertion through different media channels with a discourse that is easy on the ear, and by supporting this with various marketing activities.

Adorno elaborates on the possibility of submitting to the sham despite seeing it for what it is in his article titled “*Stars on Earth*” where he provides a detailed analysis of the astrology columns of the Los Angeles Times. The aim of the article is to develop a deeper understanding of the large-scale social phenomena that entail irrational elements, and their underlying motives. According to Adorno, irrationality is not the adoption of attitudes that are completely unrelated to the goals of the individual or collective ego. On the contrary, the cases that need to be examined are those in which rational self-serving, as generally understood, is taken to extremes that is irrational. This is the historical fate of the reason, as explained in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The clear rationality of the commonsensical advice provided in the astrology columns of newspapers and magazines support this contention. The advice provided in these columns is not esoteric at all. You should avoid quarrels within the family today, or it is a good day to make financial arrangements, or buying/selling, preparations for a holiday, starting a new relationship, etc. (Adorno, 2009: 23-24).

The period in which we see the transition of culture into an industry is post Second World War era which is characterized by increased industrialization and a preference for all means of consumption that provide personal pleasure. Being one of these means, astrology can be said to have served as a curtain of illusion that stood between the internal world of the individual and the difficult conditions of the external world.

¹ Frankfurt school is the representation of Institute for Social Research, which was established in 1923, as a movement of thought that brought together people from different disciplines such as sociology, political science, psychoanalysis, history, esthetics, philosophy, musicology. The general approach of the school is referred to as critical theory. Source: http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt_Okulu
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The occultism of astrology columns is a 'secondary superstition,' or the occult element has 'institutionalized, materialized, and –to a large extent– socialized.' The readers heeding the advice provided in these columns do not rely on a personal belief in them and they do not need the legitimizing of the practice of astrological reasoning. The working mechanisms of the astrology system are not disclosed in any way in the astrology columns of mainstream newspapers. (Adorno, 2009: 24)

Since it does not necessitate active participation of the individuals in any social channel, and it exerts its influence only on their existence as receivers, astrology stands as an example of an architect of one-way communication. In this convolution of cause and effect that only takes the form of acceptance, the pseudo-reality of the world of mystery that the individual voluntarily accepts replaces pure reason that she knows and recognizes from her daily life.

Astrology survives by staying away from devoutness: 'Alienation from an experience, a certain degree of elusiveness that enshrouds the world of commercialized occultism can surely accompany the underlying faithlessness and skepticism, the suspicion of a sham that is identified with modern irrationality.' In his analysis of astrology columns, Adorno tries to show how these columns try to realize a conservative ideology that legitimizes the status quo. Astrology columns depict a benevolent image of the society: being agreeable, and heeding the 'insight' in these columns and exerting a little more effort is enough to achieve personal success. The image of social agreeableness is supported by the implicit rules that fundamentally shape these columns: a person needs to adjust herself in accordance with the control of the stars. Astrology columns support narcissism of the reader by placing her in the position of a subtle power that can indirectly change the conditions by way of her doings. Despite the atmosphere of pseudo individualism and pseudo agency that is created, this also points to the impotency of the individual and this impotency is imaginarily offset by connotations such as an unexpected turn of fortune, an unexpected aid, etc. (Adorno, 2009: 25-26).

The projected reality of astrology, which supports Don De Lilla who said that it is the very reality that collapses, has enabled the individual, who has self-imprisoned to the stars, break free from her usual order by being lifted from the world into the sky. In a certain way, all individuals believed, or are tricked into believing, that this drift can provide the pleasure that they need. Consumer demand grew with the grating of this feeling and has reached the order of thousands or even millions today.

Like the culture industry, astrology blurs the distinction between fiction and reality, and while it maintains an overly realistic stance on the one hand, it adorns that content with a metaphysical aura, due to its origins, on the other hand. (Adorno, 2009: 26).

This sentence supports the question starting with "what is?" Adorno's analysis provides the answer to the question of 'why is it the case that one of these fields, i.e. astrology which operated under the roof of science for some time, became more popular than astronomy' by backing itself up with the precision of science, and, yet, serving the ostensible reality with the comfort of not being a field of science?

In drawing boundaries around the concepts that he addressed in his studies, which include in-depth information on the reasons underlying the perception of astrology as a commodity

today, Adorno considered the socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political conditions of his day and carried out his analysis by observing the influences of these conditions. Adorno started his studies as a thinker who belonged to the Frankfurt School established in 1923 in Germany, but was exiled from the Nazi and Fascist dominated Europe to the USA in 1933. His sojourn continued until 1950 during which his experiences affected his thoughts. He thus included the conditions prevailing in the USA and in the world in his thought frames in this time interval. The Second World War that characterized the period and rationalism's losing its effect since the beginning of the 20th century and leaving its place to irrational trends led to astrology's having its fair share of the impacts of this period in terms of the meanings that were attributed to it within the Culture Industry theory (Adorno, 2009: 26). The important point is that these views put forward as thoughts that belong to the 20th century still make people think in the 21st century, and have projections for the future as well as for today.

Witnessing the realization of the projection that practically all facets of life would turn into industry first hand and realizing that we are indeed the objects of this life creates a desire to delve into the depths of the theory. The fact that astrology, like all commodities, has a market, as a matter of fact one that has an admirable size should be deemed as evidence for the projective success of Culture Theory. Surely the theory did not put this forward to be successful at that, but while this can be criticized from a sociological point of view, one has to admit its capitalistic success. While the success of the theory lies at this *dialectic*², the success of marketing lies on its ability to contain the needles of criticism and transform them into a product.

The perspective that the theory brings to the fields that it criticizes entails, excluding an absolute generalization, a richness that all those who can read and think would agree on and give a standing ovation to, figuratively speaking. It is exactly at this point that the following question raises its head: if critical perspective is correct to such an extent, and if it does not affirm the transformation of culture into industry, how come anything that is transformed into an industry – astrology being a leading example with its incredible market size– rides so high! While there is no single answer, the best answer would be 'this success depends' – on the circumstances and what it is evaluated with regard to! In making such an evaluation, it would be sensible to say that it would be evaluated with regard to 'marketing', which incorporates the concepts of industry, commodity, and market. The world of marketing, which is home to many concepts such as industry, commodity, profit, and sale, has declared its kingdom with an ever-growing body of subordinates in a land far away from all this criticism. Let's take a look at Astrology's status in this kingdom.

MARKETED ASTROLOGY

We often come across this relationship, which pulls down the stars from the sky to the earth under the heading of 'virtual marketing.' The widespread definition of marketing that entails only advertising and branding has now changed with the internet. The primary reason for internet being the common medium for the marketing of astrology is the development of technology and a consequential change in the traditional marketing methods. Nevertheless, a secondary reason is the necessity for 'astrology' to be marketed as a commodity by being

² The concept of Dialectic originally refers to the art of debate or convincing the opponent using conflicting approaches. It is reasoning carried out using oppositions. Source: <http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diyalektik>
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transformed into verbal or written transcription, due to its very nature.

The players in the market are astrology and the astrologer. Astrology that has become a commodity ceases to be referred to with a single name and joins the sectors that are created to meet the demands in different market segments.

While astrology, which is prevalent in several other fields of practice, continues its presence in practically all fields of life, astrologers who give voice to stars have reinforced their position in marketing via their astrology columns, internet blogs, best-selling books and magazines, TV programs, or as teachers in astrology schools, and on commercials every now and then.

Table 1 Various Application Areas of Astrology³

Psychological astrology	The use of astrological knowledge and tools in consulting people to help them understand themselves, their roles in life, and their strengths and weaknesses.
Sinastria (comparison of horoscopes)	The use of astrological knowledge and tools in consulting people to manage their interpersonal relationships.
Business Astrology	The use of astrological knowledge and tools in consulting people to help them in their business and daily lives, political events, and issues relating to the history.
Prediction Astrology	Use of astrologic knowledge and tools to provide information to people on the past, the future, and now. The appropriate astrological periods are chosen. Horary and electional methods are within this category.
Esoteric Astrology	Using astrological knowledge, it fundamentally helps people give an identity to themselves, their culture, their self, their spirit, and their past. In addition to the core astrological tools, use of certain clairvoyance methods can be acceptable.
Medical Astrology	Using astrological knowledge and tools in consulting people to help them with their health.
Rectification Astrology	Determination of the exact times of certain events, e.g. the birth of people, using astrological knowledge and tools.
Cyclic Astrology	Performing weather forecasts, prediction sunbursts, and natural cycles of population changes using astrological knowledge and tools.

Interview with Astrologer Ata Nirun:

If you ask the question 'what is one of the most important passions of recent years or an example of mass hysteria?' More than half of responding people would say Astrology. What is the reason for this passion? Why are people interested in astrology this much? What lies at the heart of this passion: a mere instinct to learn about the future, or do the overwhelming conditions that we live in today push us to beliefs that are beyond the line?

³ 'On Definition of Astrology', article: Michael Munkasey, © 1977 trans.: Mehmet Arap. Source: http://www.astrolojidergisi.com/makale_astrolojinin_tanımı-uzerine.htm.

Ata Nirun replies that:

Research shows that people believe in Astrology in three different ways. The first is through their experiences and checking the results, instinctively believing in it, or under the influence of traditional or regional influences.

The intermittent success of astrology can of course be explained by the rules of coincidence. Nevertheless, the fundamental laws of Astrology host a logic that suggests coincidences do not happen blindly, on the contrary, they all rely on a numerical order and period. Thus, the existence of a relationship between the movements of planets in the solar system and the timing of events in people's lives on earth is considered to be a core element in the study of Astrology.

The second types of people who are affected by Astrology, i.e. the mystical type, already have a faith and at the roots of this faith lay a need to learn about the future. For example, the media is blamed for Astrology, as if the media publicized astrology primarily to benefit from it. Those who bring about this criticism, however, have to remember that almost everything in the world is based on a motive for commercial gain. This includes all fields of science, space, arts, and spiritual beliefs (<http://www.bilinmeyen.com>).

Mass hysteria refers to the concept of the contemporary popular culture. '*The overwhelming conditions that we live in today*' finds its foundations in the culture industry theory. '*Almost everything in the world is based on a motive for commercial gain,*' suggests that even spiritual 'things' are now turned into '*commodity*'. From a consumer demand perspective, the effort to respond to a need – with an ever increasing and differentiating range of marketing activities – and the diversification of this effort in accordance with the attention of consumers, announces that the last stop of our journey to the stars would be Capitalism. The hosts waiting for us at this stop are two concepts called *popular* and *global*. Capitalism's way of managing crises, globalism, has to be scrutinized when we talk about the popularity of astrology. The parallel developments in globalization and marketing indicate that all industrial products are influenced by globalization, and they try to take their place in the market. For Astrology, the size of the demand is directly proportional to the variety in marketing activities. The range of products that support this sentence houses different marketing activities for each product through different channels. For example, Astrology TV, astrology magazine, astrology journal are showcased, whereas headings such as astrology package, astrological holiday selection, etc. come into existence through advertising.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the astrology sector, we come across at every corner; we see a leading product with its versatility for marketing. No product can match astrology in creating demand by directing the individual to her inner world/herself. While the attention of the consumer is conscious or subconscious, Culture Industry Theory has a few words to say about the level of attention directed to this product.

Culture Industry posits that 'Popular culture occupies people, leaves them idle, and thus helps preserve the *status quo*'. It says 'people who are under the influence of others turn

their attention to fortune telling, or astrology since they do not know about the future. The reason for that is that the person is not the subject of her own life' (www.umutdolu.com/egitim-kultur/.../frankfurt-okulu.asp-). Meanwhile, marketing calls the consumer to the market at all fronts so that she would not achieve a higher level of consciousness.

Regardless of whether we agree with their consumption consciously or unconsciously, we know that astrology and astral products are by our side and we might achieve a sense of relief by consuming these products, leading to happiness, this euphoria can turn into a habit and lead us to live the life of an unconscious consumer.

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